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INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9089  
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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3730  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0270  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6011  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4817  
RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 002941

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2018

TAGS: PGOV PK PREL PINR

SUBJECT: PPP'S ZARDARI WINS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REF: A. 07 ISLAMABAD 4340  
1B. ISLAMABAD 2797  
1C. ISLAMABAD 2906  
1D. ISLAMABAD 2940

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) Summary: Nineteen days after former President Pervez Musharraf resigned and nine months after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate Asif Zardari was elected September 6 as the new President of Pakistan. We now expect he will be sworn in on September 9. Despite ongoing concerns about his character and qualifications, Zardari easily won, gathering 69 percent of the votes in the Electoral College. He held the PPP rank and file and his coalition partners, won the votes of traditional PPP rival Karachi's Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), and added support of most of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) parliamentarians (wooed at an election-eve dinner from abstaining in protest of military operations in the frontier) and defectors from Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party.

12. (C) Musharraf's PML largely defected to support Zardari rather than Nawaz Sharif's candidate in the center, but switched to Nawaz in Punjab, where the next Zardari-Nawaz battle is shaping up. Jubilant PPP supporters hoisted pictures of Benazir Bhutto, as Zardari's victory was seen as vindication for her assassination. On election eve, Zardari drove a stake through Nawaz's judicial restoration campaign; three deposed Supreme Court and three Peshawar High Court judges re-took the oath of office on September 5. Election day was marred by a Taliban attack that killed 13 people in Peshawar, earthquake tremors felt from Peshawar to Islamabad, and news that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves dropped again. President Zardari and his Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani face daunting challenges ahead. End summary.

Landslide

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13. (U) Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-Chair Asif Zardari easily won the September 6 presidential election to succeed former President Pervez Musharraf. Pakistan's electoral college -- the Senate and National Assembly voting together as the federal parliament and the Provincial Assemblies voting separately -- consists of 702 votes; Zardari won with 482 (69 percent of the Electoral College).

14. (U) The votes of 100 senators and 342 members of the

National Assembly (MNAs) are counted fully in the electoral college. The votes of members of the Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) -- 371 in Punjab, 166 in Sindh, 124 in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and 65 in Balochistan -- are weighted such that each body receives 65 votes in the electoral college.

¶5. (U) A tally follows for each of the leading presidential candidates -- PPP's Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Zaman Siddiqui, and Pakistan Muslim League's (PML) Mushahid Hussain.

Federal Parliament (Senate and National Assembly): Zardari 281, Siddiqui 111, Hussain 34, voided/abstained 14; full weighting. (Note: There are two vacant National Assembly seats.)

Punjab Assembly: Zardari 123, Siddiqui 201, Hussain 36, voided/abstained 11; weighted Zardari 22, Siddiqui 35, Hussain 7, voided/abstained ¶1.

Sindh Assembly: Zardari 162, Siddiqui 0, Hussain 0, voided/abstained 4; weighted Zardari 64, Siddiqui 0, Hussain 0, voided/abstained ¶1.

NWFP Assembly: Zardari 107, Siddiqui 10, Hussain 3, voided/abstained 4; weighted Zardari 56, Siddiqui 5, Hussain 2, voided/abstained ¶2.

ISLAMABAD 00002941 002 OF 002

Balochistan Assembly: Zardari 59, Siddiqui 2, Hussain 2, voided/abstained 2; no weighting necessary.

TOTAL: Zardari 482, Siddiqui 153, Hussain 45, voided 20 = 700  
(Note: There are two vacant National Assembly seats.)

The Process  
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¶6. (U) According to the Constitution, the candidate who wins "the largest number of votes" is declared president, i.e., an absolute majority of 352 votes is not/not needed. Ballots were cast from 10am to 3pm in the national and provincial capitals. Members could vote at any time during the period; there was little ceremony to the process. Following the voting, Pakistan's Election Commission (ECP) tallied the results in the presence of the parties in the chambers. Tallies were reported to the ECP headquarters in Islamabad, which then summed the count, reported the results and declared a winner. We expect Zardari to be sworn in on September 9.

¶7. (C) Comment: Unlike Musharraf's controversial October 6, 2007, re-election where nearly half the electors had resigned from or boycotted the legislatures (ref A), Pakistan's parties fully participated in this process. Most importantly for the next battle between Zardari and Nawaz in the Punjab, a large number of Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League defected to support Zardari over Nawaz's candidate in the center but switched to Nawaz in the Punjab. The proverbial icing on the cake was Zardari's ability to convince six deposed Supreme Court and Peshawar High Court judges to re-take the oath of office on election eve. This ensures Zardari will begin his tenure having outmaneuvered Nawaz on this contentious issue. Election day was marred by a Taliban attack that killed 13 people in Peshawar, earthquake tremors that were felt from Peshawar to Islamabad, and news that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves dropped again. It is worth noting that Prime Minister Gilani remains the de jure head of Pakistan's parliamentary government although President Zardari is now unquestionably the de facto power in Pakistan. End comment.

PATTERSON